



Delta Independent Science Board

DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

May 31, 2022

Dr. Laurel Larsen, Delta Lead Scientist
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RE: Response to the Delta Science Program's Assessment of the Impact and Value of the Delta Independent Science Board

Dear Dr. Larsen:

The Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB) thanks the Delta Science Program for its thorough and [insightful review](#) of the Delta ISB's first decade of activities. The inventory of the Board's more than fifty major products in its first 10 years documents the scope and history of past activities for state officials in agencies and the legislature, members of the public and stakeholders, and incoming Delta ISB members who can build upon these products. We appreciate learning that a wide variety of stakeholders and agencies have used the Delta ISB's products to make changes in and otherwise inform programs and activities and that it is "recognized as an important source of independent scientific oversight and review in the Delta." Finally, we were heartened to learn that the Delta ISB scientific findings are highly trusted, its products are held as a source of independent credible information, and reviews are seen as "scientifically rigorous and relevant to Delta science and management." The substantial stakeholder suggestions documented will help the Delta ISB in planning and improving its activities and products into the future.

We concur with the suggestion that Delta ISB products can be made more useful by increasing the awareness of Delta ISB products and recommendations with the Delta Stewardship Council (Council), other state and federal agencies, and all

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stakeholders. We have been making changes in the last few years to enhance connections between Delta ISB products and diverse needs of the science enterprise, and we aim to continually improve such efforts. We have developed several ideas for operational changes for further exploration. We would also like to consider a clear process by which Delta ISB reviews are integrated into the Delta Science Strategy to complement the current informal process of uptake in strategy documents.

We also intend to continue improving the Delta ISB's internal workings, particularly the process of selecting and conducting reviews by more meaningfully engaging diverse stakeholders and by broadening the range of product types produced to be effective for different audiences. We have already taken steps to reach out to multiple stakeholders early in review initiation and planning, instead of waiting until we publish a review prospectus for comment. We will continue to adapt our review process to expand and deepen our interactions with diverse stakeholders during all phases of review development. We will be seeking opportunities for regular interactions with diverse stakeholders on review scoping, post-review workshops, blog posts, conversations and presentations with agency leaders, and other communication mechanisms.

We understand that some stakeholders expressed an interest in making the recommendations of thematic reviews more practical and actionable. We agree that increasing the specificity of recommendations will be useful in some cases, primarily where our stakeholder engagement has identified who can best act on the review results and the review process has the level of detail needed to generate specific and actionable recommendations. However, reviews take many forms and we have a role in evaluating the use of science in achieving broad social or cross-agency goals. Although we always strive to identify entities that can use the information, often additional work is needed to tailor Delta ISB advice into specific agency actions. We seek to balance the practicality of recommendations with our role to inspire and advance ideas that may be difficult to implement in the short term, but are needed and possible over longer time frames. We will be reviewing and updating our guidelines for reviews to acknowledge these complementary goals of matching some advice to agencies and programs but also stretching into areas that may require broad, systemic, and longer-term changes in how science is created, integrated and applied.

In addition to developing approaches to learn from and receive information from stakeholders, we will continue to identify options for raising awareness of Delta ISB products and tailoring products to different audiences. We have met with Council

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communications staff to learn more about their capabilities and operations and develop implementation ideas for existing and new reviews and activities. More generally, we would like to continue to learn about how agencies receive scientific information to inform our choices of publication venues and other outreach options. We hope that the Council and the Delta Science Program can be partners in future communication planning.

We look forward to continued feedback on the effectiveness and usefulness of our Board activities and reviews and how they can be improved and become more useful for this challenging system in the second decade of the Delta ISB's existence.

Sincerely,



Lisa Wainger, Ph.D.
Chair-elect, Delta Independent Science Board



Jay Lund, Ph.D.
Past Chair, Delta Independent Science Board



Stephen Brandt, Ph.D.
Chair, Delta Independent Science Board

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